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CINCINNATI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

ACTION

OF THE

CINCINNATI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND
MERCHANTS' EXCHANGE

CONCERNING

THE QUESTIONS ANNOUNCED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN CONGRESS, TO BE
HELD IN WASHINGTON OCTOBER 2, 1889.

CINCINNATI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

ACTION OF THE CINCINNATI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND MERCHANTS' EXCHANGE CONCERNING THE QUESTIONS ANNOUNCED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE INTERNA- TIONAL AMERICAN CONGRESS, TO BE HELD IN WASHING- TON OCTOBER 2, 1889.

*To the Board of Directors, Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, and
Merchants' Exchange:*

The subject-matter covered by a circular letter of the Secretary of State for the United States which asks for suggestions from boards of trade and chambers of commerce as to the propositions to be considered in a conference proposed to be held between the United States of America, of the Central and South American States, and Hayti and San Domingo, which was, under act of July 9 last, referred to the delegates of the Chamber of Commerce to the National Board of Trade, has been duly considered, and the following report thereon is respectfully submitted:

As to the *first* proposition set forth in the act of Congress authorizing the President of the United States to arrange for the conference, which reads as follows: "Measures that shall tend to preserve the peace and promote the prosperity of the several American states," it seems fit to say, that obviously the first means to secure the peace and promote the prosperity of the several American states is a plan for arbitrating disputes that may arise between them. This is dictated by the enlightened demands of modern civilization, as well as by the interests of commerce. To preserve peace between states nothing is likely to be more conservative in its influence, or to stimulate more actively a proper feeling of forbearance, or to provoke a more just concern for equity, than a sense of interdependence in commercial intercourse.

Hence the *second* of the subjects presented, which is in the following words: "Measures towards the formation of an Amer-

ican customs union, under which the trade of the American nations with each other shall, so far as possible and profitable, be promoted," is conspicuous as one of the most important of the things to be attained by the conference. The fact that the products of the states invited to the conference differ widely from those of our own country makes the establishment of a customs union and reciprocal trade an easy matter, evidently called for by proper considerations of public policy. Something on the plan of reciprocal trade relations once had with the Dominion of Canada, or that of the Dutch Zolverein, may doubtless afford a basis for the establishment of a customs union by the American states. The full statistics afforded by a report from the Treasury Department in May, 1888, are suggestive of the interest of the United States in this matter, and constitute at least one of the means to the end desired.

As to topic *three*, "the establishment of regular and frequent communication between the ports of the several American states and the ports of each other," it is to be said that the desirableness of improved, more regular, and rapid means of commercial intercourse between the states called to take part in the conference is universally admitted by those of our citizens who have expressed themselves on the subject, and there has been wide discussion of it in conventions, in the National Board of Trade, and in commercial organizations in different cities by persons who represented all the leading industries. There has not been the fullest agreement as to plans by which such improvement may be brought about, but the sentiment that the Government of this country should by judicious subsidy promote ocean navigation, especially that which relates to the commerce of the American states, largely predominates. Discussions in the convention which may refer to this important topic will doubtless be among the most interesting and suggestive that will take place. The advantages to accrue from approbative action upon it will not be limited to the United States.

Topic *four*, which is as follows: "The establishment of a uniform system of customs regulations in each of the independent American states to govern the mode of importation and exportation of merchandise and port dues and charges, a uniform method of determining the classification and valuation of such merchandise in the ports of each country, and a uniform system of invoices, and the subject of the sanitation of ships and

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quarantine," is scarcely more than a suggestion that there be formulated a working plan to give commerce between the states called to the conference easy, practical facilities for its benign work. The formulas for this are doubtless afforded by the systems that experience has suggested to those who have the administration of the customs service in hand. It is virtually a corollary of the propositions that precede it.

Topic *five*, "the adoption of a uniform system of weights and measures, and laws to protect the patent-rights, copyrights, and trade-marks of citizens of either country in the other, and for the extradition of criminals," is one of the most important in the list. Nothing in these days is more essential in the prosecution of business than simplicity in forms and methods, and nothing conduces more directly to that than uniformity in laws and customs that regulate traffic, as well that between citizens of our own country as between those of different countries. The practical suggestion to make in this connection is that weights and measures be upon the cental system, with common units of computation; that commodities should, as far as possible, be exchanged by weight; that revenue laws, patent laws, laws relating to debt, to insurance, to certification of papers, to exchange, to bills of lading, to copyright, to the formation and regulation of corporations, and to the extradition of criminals should be simple and uniform. Propositions for legislation to this effect can probably go no further than suggestion or recommendation; yet it may be that a joint commission to have in charge the promotion of requisite action by the states in the conference can be arranged for.

Topic numbered *six*, "The adoption of a common silver coin, to be issued by each Government, the same to be legal tender in all commercial transactions between the citizens of all American states," brings to the front the pressing, very important question of an international money system, connected with which must needs be considered that of the relation of the two precious metals serving as money. A consideration of this is likely to be most opportune, if rightly directed, and as there can not well be now any risk of losing the affirmative position of the United States on this question, there would seem to be little reason to doubt that discussion of it by the leading producers of money metals and the taking of such action as might enable them to be mutually defensive would be of timely benefit. If discussion be confined strictly to the topic as stated

there will necessarily come up the divergence in value of the coins that are either known as dollars in different nations, or as are nearly their equivalents under other names. Possibly on this point "The United States" may find occasion to concede as much as it can ask, and although the relations of the states called to this conference are on nearly all counts especially strong and evidently destined to become stronger, yet attention must be given to the great importance of bringing all nations into that practical relation on this subject that the best experience of modern political and economic science may suggest.

The treatment given to topic one in this paper necessarily covers or applies to topic *seven*, "An agreement upon and recommendation for adoption to their respective Governments of a definite plan of arbitration of all questions, disputes, and differences that may now or hereafter exist between them, to the end that all difficulties and disputes between such nations may be peaceably settled and wars prevented." Almost the first requisite for successful trade is a sense of security, hence the first demand in negotiations for more intimate and substantial intercourse between states is that there be guaranties for the preservation of peace.

On the suggestion embodied in topic *eight*, "And to consider such other subjects relating to the welfare of the several states represented as may be presented by any of said states which are hereby invited to participate in said conference," it may not be out of place to recommend for consideration methods by which a compact between the states which participate in the conference may be made that will result in a comprehensive survey of the ocean and gulf coasts of the states represented and also an effective light-house system established. Possibly a joint commission to consider these subjects may expedite practical results in regard to them.

The proposed conference of American states can not but be regarded as a very important event. The phenomenal progress which marks the present era, especially in our own country, calls for the opening and enlarging of all possible paths for commerce, and nothing is more likely to promote these desirable objects than attempts to bring people having a community of interests, as have those of the Western Hemisphere, into such relations as will tend to develop the amazing resources that are at their hands and that may promote political harmony.

The members of your committee beg leave to recommend, if they have in this report reflected the thoughts of the chamber, that a copy of it, modified as may be desirable, be duly submitted to the Secretary of State as a response to his circular of the 17th of June ultimo.

They would beg leave further to suggest a consideration of the propriety of delegating one or more representatives of the chamber to attend the conference.

Most respectfully,

JOHN A. GANO.
S. LESTER TAYLOR.
CHARLES B. MURRAY.
EARL W. STIMSON.
LEVI C. GOODALE.
J. D. PARKER.
S. F. COVINGTON.

Adopted by board of directors.
W. P. S.

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